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UNCLAS VATICAN 003376

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/PGI (IVAN WEINSTEIN), EUR/WE (JAN LEVIN)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AMGT PREL VT IZ

SUBJECT: REPLY TO CPB COMMISSIONER BONNER

REF: SECSTATE 184111

¶11. (U) This is Embassy Vatican's response to reftel concerning difficulties encountered at U.S. ports of entry. The most egregious recent case that has come to our attention is that of Monsignor Philip Najim, a British citizen and the senior representative of the Chaldean Catholic Church to the Vatican (The Chaldean Catholic community, with ancient roots in Iraq and Syria, now has several churches in the U.S., particularly in Michigan and California.) Monsignor Najim, a close Embassy contact who has met with the Ambassador on developments in Iraq relating to the Christian community, experienced severe problems and delay when he entered the U.S. at JFK airport approximately two weeks ago.

¶12. (SBU) Monsignor Najim, (DPOB: 26 Sept 1959, Baghdad. UK Ppt # 7032235843) senior representative of the Chaldean Catholic Church to The Holy See, arrived at JFK on August 17.

He was requested to go to secondary, where he was made to wait for over four hours, finally fingerprinted, photographed and told he was subject to Special Registration procedures. Meanwhile, Catholic officials waiting at JFK to pick him up had no idea what had become of him. Najim is extremely upset about the incident, and how he was treated during the process. Some of his colleagues have suggested approaching the media to publicize the incident as an example of "persecution of people of Iraqi descent," but Monsignor Najim has so far requested that they not publicize the incident. He contacted Post from the U.S. soon after this incident to relay his concerns.

¶13. (U) Post has contacted DHS representatives at Embassy Rome regarding Monsignor Najim's case. The Chaldean Church has been generally supportive of U.S. actions in Iraq, and has been an important voice of moderation and religious understanding. At a time when we are trying to build and maintain ties with leaders of the new Iraq, this incident has set back our relations with an important actor.

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